BOOK REVIEW FOR BIOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

Michael Jeffries;
Biodiversity and Conservation. (2nd Edition). Routledge, 2006. ISBN 1-56022-923-3 (paperback). 236 pages. Price £18.50.

This book, now in its second edition, continues to provide a valuable introduction to the field of biodiversity and conservation. The new edition has been updated to reflect changes in conservation legislation and through the provision of additional case material throughout. There have also been welcome improvements in the quality of the figures and the layout of the text. Nevertheless, the book retains the simple structure of first edition, being organised into five chapters and based around three themes. The first three chapters deal comprehensively with the concept of biodiversity from both a social and scientific perspective. They outline its origins, definition and current status across the globe, as well as some of the key ecological mechanisms that facilitate the creation of biodiversity and maintain ecosystem function. The fourth chapter addresses biodiversity loss, including the rate of loss at both a species and ecosystem level and the main causes of this. There is a particular focus here on human-induced ecosystem change and a brief overview of some of the key elements of extinction theory associated with small populations. The final chapter provides a rudimentary introduction to the conservation of biodiversity, dealing with legislation, current thinking on the selection and design of protected areas and *ex-situ* conservation.

As part of the Routledge Introduction to Environment Series the book fulfils its intended role well. Its breadth of coverage, multi-disciplinary approach and organisation around basic themes means that it will appeal to a non-scientific audience as well as providing a useful foundation text for undergraduate students of Conservation Biology. Its other strengths lie in the useful discussion questions at the end of each chapter, the accessible style in which it is written and its relatively low cost. However, as might be expected of an introductory text, it provides insufficient depth to be suitable for advanced undergraduate or postgraduate studies, although this is compensated for, to some extent, by the comprehensive range of further reading material at the end of the book. This is invaluable in providing the reader with references to some of the more established texts, which deal with key topics such as conservation practice in far greater detail.

In summary, by adopting an approach that brings together both science and social sciences the book provides an accessible introduction to the field of Biodiversity and Conservation. As such I can wholeheartedly recommend it as a useful starting point for those with a general interest in the subject matter as well as a foundation for those in their early stages of tertiary study.

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